

# Wild Trout Streams

**A**mong Idaho's 26,000 miles of streams are some of the world's most famous trout fishing waters. The Henrys Fork, Silver Creek, the South Fork Snake River and Kelly Creek, for example, are the subjects of dozens of books, hundreds of articles, and countless angler daydreams. For some anglers, a chance to test their fishing skills against ultra wary rainbow trout in places like Harriman Ranch or

native cutthroat, or the abundance of brook trout.

The geographic and geologic diversity of the Gem State gives rise to every stream type from small mountain streams to spring creeks to larger freestone rivers. The interaction of water (hydrology) and earth (geology) helps determine channel shape, habitat type and even the insect hatches that occur.

**Freestone streams** – the most common

Idaho stream type – are driven by snowmelt and spring runoff. Fish habitat can best be described as dynamic: low in the winter, high in the spring, and gradually decreasing through summer and fall. In the spring, water levels – and fishing conditions – can vary from day to day due to rain or melting snow. Fishing will generally improve as flows start to drop. Freestone stream trout often migrate seasonally to adjust to changing conditions or to reach spawning areas. Famous Idaho freestone streams include Kelly Creek, the St. Joe River and the South Fork of the Snake River.

**Spring Creeks** are primarily influenced by groundwater or natural spring flows. Conditions such as flows and temperature tend

to be more consistent than in freestone streams. This translates into more reliable fishing conditions and aquatic insects in abundance. When temperatures are optimal for trout, the result can be truly exceptional growth rates. The biggest fishing challenge associated with spring creeks is usually the fish themselves; they can be some of the toughest trout in the world to catch. Because spring creeks generally flow slowly and have crystal clear water, fish are easily spooked and anglers must be stealthy and present the lure or fly in just the right spot. Idaho's famous spring creeks include Silver Creek and the Henrys Fork of the Snake River.



Rob Perkins

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***Pursuing wild trout in an Idaho stream is as much about getting away as it is about catching fish***

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Silver Creek is the pinnacle of stream trout fishing. For others, what really makes Idaho special is the many dozens of lesser-known streams full of willing rainbow and cutthroat trout.

Whatever stream sits at the top of your list, it is difficult to argue that *variety* makes Idaho truly special to stream trout anglers. Idaho has it all, from a quick lunch hour trip to the Boise River in the capitol city, to a week-long adventure in the Middle Fork Salmon River wilderness, and everything in-between. Variety also describes the fish, whether it's the acrobatic fight of a rainbow, the charge of a German brown, the aggressiveness and beauty of a

